Addressing Severe Class Imbalance for Deception Detection in Diplomacy Negotiations

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Abstract

Detecting deception in multi-agent communication, specifically within the strategic game of Diplomacy, is crucial for AI development and understanding human interaction but poses significant challenges. A key difficulty is the inherent class imbalance in interaction data, where deceptive messages often vastly outnumber truthful ones. This project explores machine learning and deep learning techniques for deception detection on a Diplomacy message dataset characterized by severe class imbalance (4.5% truthful messages in training). We establish baselines including traditional ML models (TF-IDF with SMOTE) and fine-tuned Transformer models (RoBERTa with Class Weighting, RoBERTa+DistilBERT Ensemble with Upsampling). Baseline analysis reveals standard methods struggle significantly with the minority (truthful) class; RoBERTa with only class weighting achieved a macro F1-score of 0.4771 and failed to identify truthful messages (F1=0.0) on the target dataset. We propose [User: Briefly state your final model's core idea, e.g., "a RoBERTa model enhanced with Focal Loss and contextual features"]. Our proposed final model achieves [User: State your final model's key result, e.g., "a macro F1-score of X.XX, significantly improving truthful message detection to Y.YY F1"]. The study highlights the limitations of standard techniques under severe imbalance and demonstrates the effectiveness of [User: Reiterate your final model's core strength] in improving detection, particularly for the underrepresented truthful class.

1 Introduction

The game of Diplomacy provides a rich testbed for studying strategic communication, negotiation, and the complex phenomenon of deception (**???**). In this game, players exchange natural language messages to forge alliances, coordinate actions, share (or misrepresent) information, and ultimately seek victory, often necessitating betrayal. Automatically detecting deception within these messages is not only valuable for creating more sophisticated and human-like AI game-playing agents (**?**) but also offers insights into the linguistic and behavioral markers of deception in high-stakes human interactions (**?**).

Consider typical message exchanges: *"France, let's coordinate our attack on Germany next turn. I'll support your move into Munich."* (This could be a genuine plan or a setup for betrayal). *"Italy, I see you moved to Piedmont. I assure you my fleet in Rome poses no threat to you this season."* (This statement's veracity is key to Italy's next move).

Developing reliable deception detection models for this domain faces significant hurdles. Deception is often subtle, context-dependent, and may not rely on easily identifiable linguistic cues (Zuckerman et al., 1981). Furthermore, datasets naturally derived from such interactions often exhibit severe class imbalance. Truthful, unambiguous statements can be far less common than messages involving strategic positioning, negotiation ambiguity, or outright deception. In the primary dataset used for our final evaluation (**?**), truthful messages constitute only about 4.5% of the training data (details in Section 4.1). This imbalance heavily biases standard classification models towards the majority (deceptive) class, hindering their ability to identify the crucial, albeit rare, truthful statements.

This work first establishes the performance of several baseline approaches on relevant Diplomacy datasets, including traditional TF-IDF based models combined with synthetic oversampling (SMOTE) and Transformer-based models (RoBERTa, DistilBERT) employing upsampling or class weighting techniques. We specifically analyze the performance of RoBERTa with class weighting on our target dataset without resampling, confirming its limitations in handling the severe imbalance. Subsequently, we propose and evaluate

[User: Briefly describe your final model/approach again, e.g., "a modified RoBERTa architecture incorporating ..."] designed to better address the class imbalance and improve the detection of truthful messages within this challenging domain.

2 Related Work

2.1 Deception Detection

Computational deception detection aims to identify falsehoods or intentional misleading in communication. Early research often focused on identifying reliable linguistic or non-verbal cues (DePaulo et al., 2003), with mixed success. Linguistic feature-based approaches, utilizing tools like LIWC (Pennebaker et al., 2001) to quantify psychological dimensions in text, combined with standard classifiers like SVMs, were common (Mihalcea and Strapparava, 2009). More recent work has leveraged deep learning, using CNNs or LSTMs to automatically learn relevant features from text sequences (Pérez-Rosas et al., 2015). The advent of pre-trained Transformers like BERT (Devlin et al., 2019) and RoBERTa (Liu et al., 2019) has significantly advanced NLP capabilities, and these models have been successfully fine-tuned for deception detection tasks, often outperforming previous methods (Hossain, 2020).

2.2 Deception in Strategic Settings

Diplomacy provides a unique environment where deception is not just present but often strategically necessary (Niccolò et al., 2021). Detecting lies in such goal-oriented dialogues is distinct from identifying simple factual inaccuracies (Volkova et al., 2017). Research on deception in similar social deduction games like Werewolf (Derici et al., 2019) or analyzing negotiation dialogues (Peskov et al., 2020) exists, but large-scale computational analysis of deception tied to ground-truth labels within Diplomacy communication is a growing area, facilitated by datasets like the one used here https://sites.google.com/view/qanta/projects/diplomacy

2.3 Handling Class Imbalance in NLP

Severe class imbalance, as seen in our dataset, is a pervasive challenge. Data-level techniques aim to rebalance the class distribution before training. Common methods include Random Over-Sampling (ROS), Random Under-Sampling (RUS), and synthetic sample generation like SMOTE (Chawla et al., 2002) or ADASYN (He et al., 2008). While effective, these methods alter the original data. Algorithm-level approaches modify the learning process. Cost-sensitive learning, often implemented via class weighting in the loss function (e.g., weighting ‘nn.CrossEntropyLoss‘ inversely to class frequency), penalizes errors on the minority class more heavily (Kukar and Kononenko, 1998). We utilize this in our primary RoBERTa baseline. Other algorithm-level methods include threshold moving (adjusting the decision threshold post-training) (Sheng and Ling, 2006) and specialized loss functions like Focal Loss (Lin et al., 2017), designed to focus training on hard-to-classify examples, which can be particularly useful when the majority class is easily classified. Ensemble methods combining multiple models can also improve robustness on imbalanced data (Galar et al., 2012).

3 Methodology

Our approach follows a standard pipeline: data loading and preprocessing, feature extraction/tokenization, baseline model training and evaluation, and finally, the implementation and evaluation of our proposed model.

3.1 Preprocessing

All message texts were preprocessed via the following steps:

- Conversion to lowercase.
- Removal of URLs using regular expressions.
- Removal of potential HTML tags.
- Removal of non-alphanumeric characters (preserving whitespace) for TF-IDF based models (‘baseline-3.ipynb‘).
- For RoBERTa models (‘baseline2.ipynb‘, Final RoBERTa baseline), similar cleaning was applied, potentially retaining essential punctuation depending on the tokenizer’s behavior. ‘baseline2.ipynb‘ specifically included NLTK tokenization and stopword removal.

3.2 Baseline Models

We evaluated three distinct sets of baselines across different experimental setups to understand the landscape:

Baseline Set 1 (TF-IDF + SMOTE + ML - from ‘baseline-3.ipynb‘):

This approach used TF-IDF features (‘max$_{f}eatures = 5000$‘, ‘$ngram_{r}ange = (1, 2)$‘)

Baseline Set 2 (RoBERTa + DistilBERT Ensemble - from ‘baseline2.ipynb‘):

*b*aseline used the ‘datasetnovel1‘ dataset (with reversed labels: Deceptive=0, Truthful=1). It upsampled the minority class (Deceptive=0) in the training data. Independent RoBERTa-base and DistilBERT-base models were fine-tuned using class weights. An ensemble prediction was made by averaging probabilities. A custom probability threshold was tuned on the validation set to maximize F1 for the minority (Deceptive=0) class, and this threshold was used for test set evaluation.

Baseline Set 3 (RoBERTa + Class Weighting - Final Target Run): This is our primary baseline for direct comparison with the proposed model. It used the target dataset (‘diplomacydataset‘) without any resampling (no upsampling or SMOTE). A standard ‘roberta-base‘ model was fine-tuned using a custom ‘WeightedTrainer‘ that applied class weights (inversely proportional to class frequency in the original training set) directly within the ‘nn.CrossEntropyLoss‘ function. Model selection was based on the best F1-Macro score on the validation set during training with early stopping. Evaluation uses the standard 0.5 probability threshold.

3.3 Proposed Final Model

Given the limitations observed in the baselines, particularly the RoBERTa baseline’s inability to detect the truthful minority class when trained solely with class weighting on the imbalanced target dataset, we propose [User: Name/describe your model, e.g., "a Focal Loss enhanced RoBERTa", "a context-aware ensemble", "RoBERTa with additional metadata features"].

Motivation: [User: Explain the rationale. Why should this approach work better? e.g., "Standard cross-entropy loss, even weighted, can be overwhelmed by numerous, easily classified majority examples. Focal Loss aims to mitigate this by dynamically scaling the loss..." or "Text alone may be insufficient; incorporating player information or game turn could provide crucial context..." or "Ensembling diverse models (e.g., text-based and feature-based) might capture different facets of deception..."].

Architecture/Technique: [User: Describe precisely what you did. - If Focal Loss: Provide the formula FL$(p_t) = -\alpha_t(1 - p_t)^\gamma \log(p_t)$, specify the values chosen for γ (gamma) and α (alpha), and explain how it was integrated (e.g., custom Trainer or modification to model’s forward pass). - If Ensemble: Detail the base models, features used for each, and the method for combining predictions (e.g., weighted averaging based on validation performance, stacking classifier). - If Features: List the exact features (e.g., message length, turn number, player identity embedding), explain how they were encoded, and how they were integrated with the text representation (e.g., concatenation before the final classification layer). - Include a diagram if helpful:]

Implementation Details: [User: Mention key libraries/frameworks beyond standard ones if used, e.g., specific libraries for graph features, unique loss implementations.]

4 Experiments

4.1 Dataset

Our final baseline (RoBERTa Class Weighted) and proposed model were trained and evaluated using the Diplomacy message dataset from ?. This dataset contains messages labeled for sender truthfulness (Truthful=0, Deceptive=1). We used the provided train, validation, and test splits in JSON Lines format, sourced from ‘/kaggle/input/diplomacydataset/‘. Table 1 shows the significant class imbalance present in all splits.

Split	Total Messages	Truthful (0)	Deceptive (1)
Train	13,132	591 (4.5%)	12,541 (95.5%)
Validation	1,416	56 (4.0%)	1,360 (96.0%)
Test	2,741	240 (8.8%)	2,501 (91.2%)

Table 1: Dataset Statistics (using ‘/kaggle/input/diplomacydataset/‘ splits).

4.2 Experimental Setup

Experiments were conducted using Python 3.10/3.11, PyTorch, Transformers, Scikit-learn, and TensorFlow (for LSTM baseline) within a Kaggle GPU environment (NVIDIA T4 or P100).

Key hyperparameters for the RoBERTa (Class Weighted) baseline (on target dataset) included: learning rate 2e-5, batch size 8, 6 epochs with early stopping (patience 2, monitoring F1-Macro), AdamW optimizer, weight decay 0.01, max sequence length 256. Class weights were approximately [11.11, 0.52] for [Truthful, Deceptive].

Hyperparameters for **preliminary baselines**:

  - *TF-IDF+SMOTE+ML (‘baseline-3.ipynb‘):* TF-IDF (‘max$_{f}eatures = 5000‘, ‘ngrams = (1, 2)‘, ‘min_{d}f = 5‘), SMOTEappliedtoTF - IDFfeatures.$

- *LSTM (‘baseline-3.ipynb‘):GloV e100dembeddings(trainable), BiLST M (64units), Dropout(0 hoc.*

- *LSTM (‘baseline-3.ipynb‘):* GloVe 100d embeddings (trainable), BiLSTM (64 units), Dropout (0.4), 6 epochs, BS 64, Adam optimizer, Class weights ([1.0, 1.0]), Early stopping (patience 3 on val_loss). Threshold tuned post-hoc.

- *RoBERTa+DistilBERT Ens. (‘baseline2.ipynb‘):* Upsampled training data, RoBERTa/DistilBERT trained 5 epochs, LR 1e-5, BS 4, AdamW, WD 0.01. Ensemble avg. probs. Threshold tuned post-hoc for Deceptive=0 class.

4.3 Evaluation Metrics

We report Accuracy, Precision, Recall, and F1-Score. Given the class imbalance, Macro F1-Score is the primary metric for model comparison and selection. We also report per-class F1 scores (F1-Truthful, F1-Deceptive) to specifically assess minority class performance.

5 Results

Table 2 summarizes the test set performance of the baseline models and our proposed final model. Note the caveats regarding different datasets and methodologies for the preliminary baselines (†).

The preliminary baseline results†, run under varied conditions (different data, resampling, threshold tuning), consistently struggled to achieve high F1-scores for the minority truthful class, although techniques like SMOTE combined with threshold tuning sometimes yielded non-zero F1 scores (e.g., 0.11-0.16). The RoBERTa+DistilBERT ensemble (‘baseline2.ipynb‘), which also used upsampling and threshold tuning (optimized for the wrong class definition relative to others here), yielded poor overall results in that specific configuration.

Our primary baseline, **RoBERTa (Class Weighted)**, evaluated strictly on the target dataset without resampling and using a standard 0.5 threshold, confirms the difficulty. While achieving high accuracy (0.9124) and Deceptive F1 (0.9542), it entirely failed on the truthful class (F1-Truthful=0.0000), yielding a poor F1-Macro (0.4771). This highlights the limitation of standard class weighting under such severe imbalance for this task.

In contrast, our proposed model, **[User: Model Name]**, evaluated under the same conditions (target dataset, no resampling unless part of the method itself, [User: specify threshold used - likely 0.5 unless tuned]), demonstrates marked improvement. It achieved an accuracy of [User: Final Accuracy] and an F1-Macro score of [User: Final F1-Macro]. Most notably, the F1-Score for the truthful class improved to [User: Final F1-Truthful]. While the F1-Score for the deceptive class was [User: Final F1-Deceptive], the significant gain in minority class detection represents a key advancement over the standard weighted baseline. [User: Add sentence explaining *briefly* why it performed better].

6 Discussion

The stark contrast between the majority and minority class F1-scores across most baselines underscores the dominating effect of class imbalance in this Diplomacy dataset. The primary RoBERTa baseline, despite utilizing class weights exceeding 11:1 for the truthful class, still collapsed into predicting the majority class, suggesting the minority signal might be too weak or easily overwhelmed when using standard weighted cross-entropy. Preliminary experiments using SMOTE or upsampling showed some limited ability to recall truthful instances, but these methods alter the data distribution. Threshold tuning also improved minority F1 in preliminary runs, but often at a significant cost to precision or overall performance, and

Model	Dataset	Method Notes	Accuracy	F1-Macro	F1-Truthful (0)	F1-Deceptive (1)
Log. Regression†	‘nlpdata‘	TF-IDF, SMOTE, Tuned Thr(0.46)	0.8497	0.5366	0.1557	0.9175
Random Forest†	‘nlpdata‘	TF-IDF, SMOTE, Tuned Thr(0.49)	0.8993	0.4806	0.0143	0.9469
Multinomial NB†	‘nlpdata‘	TF-IDF, SMOTE, Tuned Thr(0.58)	0.7771	0.4916	0.1106	0.8726
LSTM (GloVe)†	‘nlpdata‘	Class Wt, Tuned Thr(0.23)	0.8646	0.5368	0.1471	0.9265
RoBERTa+DistilBERT Ens.†	‘datasetnovel1‘	Upsample, Ens, Tuned Thr(0.05)	0.333	0.308	0.440*	0.176*
RoBERTa (Class Weighted)	‘diplomacy...‘	Class Wt Only, Thr(0.5)	0.9124	0.4771	**0.9278**	0.9542
Proposed Model	‘refineddata‘	RoBERTa, Upsample + Wt, Thr(0.5)	**0.9352**	**0.9345**	**0.9278**	**0.9412**

Table 2: Comparison of Model Performance on Test Sets. (†) indicates results obtained on different datasets or using methods like SMOTE/Upsampling/post-hoc threshold tuning; interpret with caution relative to final baseline/proposed model. (*) Note: Baseline2 used Deceptive=0, Truthful=1; F1 scores reflect this reversal. Final Baseline and Proposed Model use Truthful=0, Deceptive=1, evaluated on ‘/kaggle/input/diplomacydataset/‘. Add threshold info if applicable. Best results for the Proposed Model on the target dataset are in bold. F1-Truthful=0.0 for the RoBERTa baseline is highlighted.

requires a representative validation set.

Our proposed model, [User: Model Name], aimed to [User: Reiterate goal]. The improved F1-Truthful score suggests that [User: Explain WHY your model worked - e.g., "Focal Loss successfully directed the model’s attention to harder truthful examples" or "The additional features provided disambiguating context"].

Error Analysis: [User: Discuss misclassifications of your FINAL model. e.g., "A qualitative analysis of errors revealed that the model still struggles with messages containing conditional promises or highly ambiguous statements. For instance, the message ’[Quote example]’ was misclassified as Deceptive, possibly because its hedge language resembles common deceptive patterns, despite being labeled truthful in context."]

Limitations: This study’s primary limitation is the extreme dataset imbalance. The definition and annotation of truthfulness in a game centered on betrayal can also be inherently ambiguous. Our final model [User: Mention its specific limitations, e.g., "still primarily relies on text", "did not incorporate dynamic game state", "may be computationally expensive"]. Generalization to other communication domains or datasets is an open question.

7 Conclusion and Future Work

We addressed the challenging task of detecting deception in Diplomacy game messages, focusing specifically on handling severe class imbalance without relying on data resampling for our primary comparisons. Standard baselines, including RoBERTa with class weighting, proved insufficient, failing entirely to detect the minority truthful class on the target dataset (F1-Truthful=0.0). Our proposed approach, utilizing [User: Briefly restate your technique], demonstrated significant improvement, achieving an F1-Macro of [User: Final F1-Macro] and boosting the F1-Truthful score to [User: Final F1-Truthful], proving more effective at learning from the underrepresented class.

Despite progress, challenges persist. Future directions include:

- **Incorporating dynamic game state features (unit positions, supply center counts, historical interactions between players).**
- **Exploring advanced data augmentation or generation techniques specifically for creating plausible truthful negotiation examples.**
- **Investigating graph neural networks to model player relationships and communication patterns over time.**

- Evaluating model robustness across different game phases (early, mid, late game) and player expertise levels.

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